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WARTIME MEMORIES

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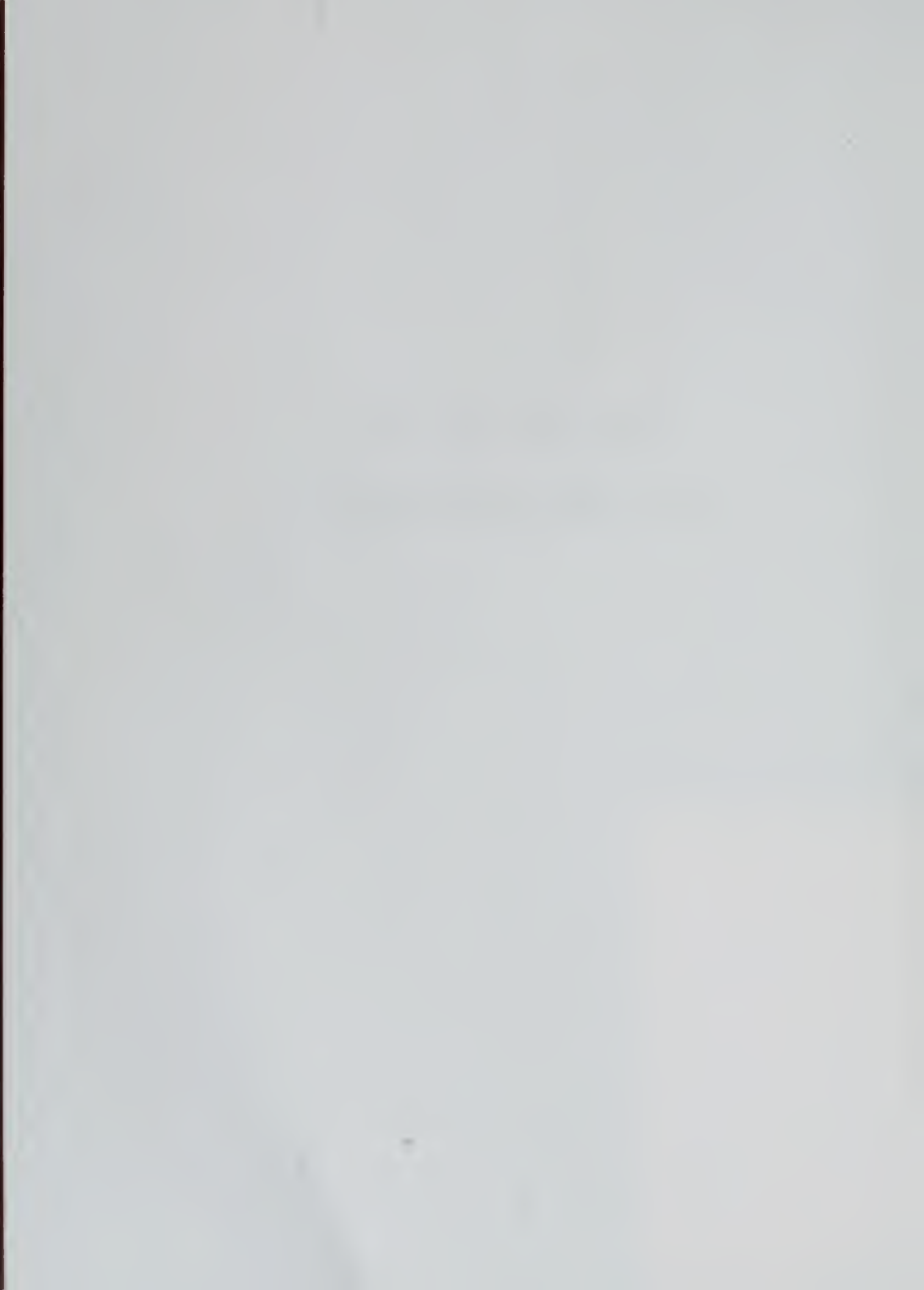


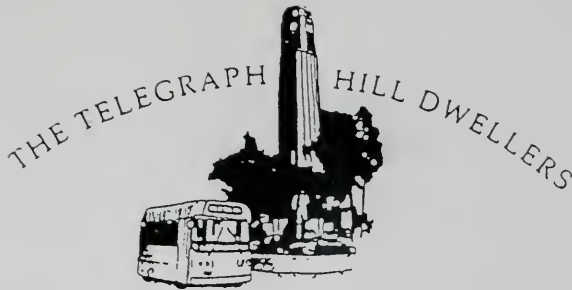
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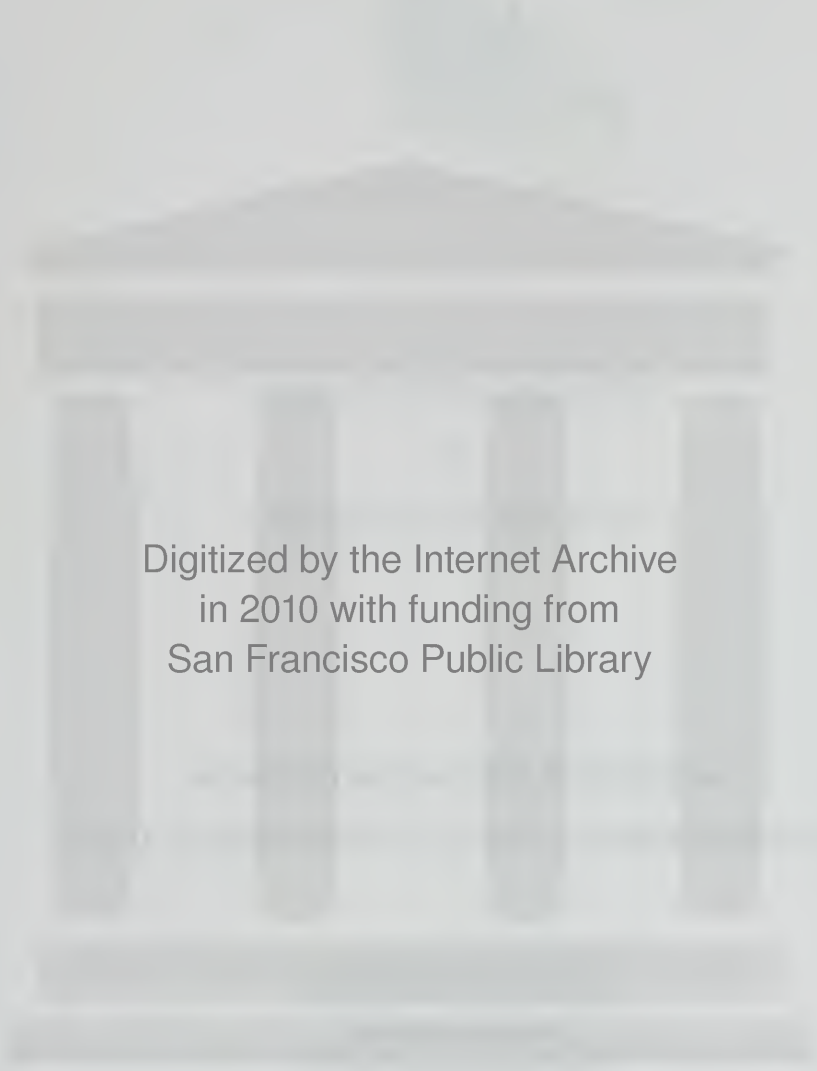


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JOE JACHETTA
WARTIME MEMORIES

INTERVIEW DATE: August 30, 1999

INTERVIEWER: Audrey Tomaselli

TRANSCRIPTION DATE: May 7, 2000

[]: Transcriber's Comments

AUDREY: Joe, we were just talking about your getting your draft notice. What year was that and how old were you?

JOE: That was 1943. I was eighteen.

AUDREY: So the War was in full tilt at that point? [Joe: Right] How many weeks did you have before you had to show up?

JOE: Well I had a month and I was in school. I had to go for a physical and *surely* they were not going to take me! I was so sick as a child that when my doctor heard that they had accepted me, he said, "We'll fix that..." But I didn't let him. I wanted to go.

AUDREY: You *wanted* to go?

JOE: I wanted to go. All my friends had gone and I actually felt wonderful that they had accepted me. I was 118 pounds and 5'6".

AUDREY: Was it just because your friends had gone [that made you want to go?]

JOE: No, it was war and there was a reason to go. I had had a friend who was killed and I had another friend my age who was already wounded. And, I don't know, you're young, you look at danger in different ways. One of the reasons they put nineteen year olds as forward observers is because a nineteen year old is more willing to take chances. Whereas an older person is liable to think it out first before putting their life on the line.

AUDREY: And being a "forward observer" is very dangerous?

JOE: Well, you didn't have eye to eye combat. We saw a lot of, well actually I never saw very many American casualties.

AUDREY: Were *you* a forward observer? (JOE: Yeah) You were! So what did that mean?

JOE: I was a forward observer. I was part of the Seventh Field Artillery Observation Battalion. And we observed *artillery* fire. The danger for me was not hand-to-hand combat or anything like that; it was sniper fire and friendly fire. Many people on the front in the infantry were killed by our own artillery. I was really just part of a survey team; I was low man on the totem pole. I was a rod man which means that you get out there where they're going to put an observation post. That is surveyed in to the



Joe, Forward Observer, 1944

command center which has to be surveyed in to the guns. You spot a target and then they start firing and, in a sense, you just say, "... a little bit more to the left or a little bit more to the right, or you're missing it altogether, or you almost hit me!"

AUDREY: So just to get back to when you got your draft notice and you were glad you were accepted, what was the reaction of your folks, you parents?

JOE: I remember my mother was ... remember I told you we had a few more things than other people in the neighborhood?... and my mother already had an electric iron. And I'll never forget; she was ironing altar cloths for St. Francis Church. And on the way home from being accepted I bought one of the flags with the star on it that they hung in the windows. And I rolled it all up and let it unfold [hand gesture holding the top of an imaginary unfurled flag] before my mother's eyes [as she was ironing] and she just ... I guess it was a mixture of shock and she was also proud. [Tears] I was never at a loss for cookies and food and stuff like that. My buddies used to wait for my mail to come.

AUDREY: Your mom sent care packages all the time?

JOE: All the time.

AUDREY: This flag you described ... it was to represent that "we have a son . . .

JOE: . . . in the service" and it hung in the window. I think if you had a flag with a *gold* star it meant that your son [had been] killed.



Oct 20 1944

Boot Camp, 1944
Joe Clowning with Red Skelton

AUDREY: Where did you go to basic training?

JOE: I went to, first to Monterey, and then to Camp Roberts where I took my basic training with Red Skelton [a famous comedian in the 40's and 50's]. As a matter of fact, that's another story. He heard me singing in the shower one day, and I was singing the song A Pretty Girl Is Like a Melody. And he asked me if I would like to sing in his show, and could I do that number just that way! The way I was doing it in the shower.

AUDREY: Could you sing a few bars for us now?

JOE: [Joe sings in his still beautiful lyric tenor voice] "A pretty girl is like a melody that haunts you night and day. Just like the strain of a haunting refrain, she'll start upon a marathon and rush around your brain ..."
Anyhow, he got this number together and he had all these Las Vegas show girls on the stage, walking down some stairs and tickling my face with feathers and stuff. They had fun with it; they thought I was a little kid.

AUDREY: We were saying earlier that you were eighteen but you looked like you were fourteen and you were very small.

JOE: That's right. Very small.

AUDREY: How did you survive the rigors of basic training?

JOE: Well, I guess I was small but mighty, you know? Up to that time I had been what they used to call a sickly child. I was paralyzed from the waist

down when I was fifteen. I had something called leukopenia which was supposed to be the opposite of leukemia. I had no white count. You don't die of leukopenia but you die of something else because you can't fight it off. So I was in a hospital called Notre Dame which was on Van Ness Avenue which I think is a retirement center now, or low-cost housing. [It is now Notre Dame Apartments -- affordable housing for folks who are seniors and/or handicapped.] At the time it was a hospital. I was there for six weeks and then out of school for over a year with a home teacher, who taught me nothing! Incidentally, one of my daughters read the other interview and she said, "Quit saying that you're illiterate! You're *not* illiterate!" And I said, "I didn't say I was illiterate, I said I was pretty illiterate. I do OK with the words that I know, but there are some things I have to look up in the dictionary."

AUDREY: You're right. You're not illiterate because if you look things up in the dictionary ...

JOE: Well, I don't mean illiterate. I guess it was just a poor choice of words.

AUDREY: Just to get back to your illness, did you have a miraculous recovery?

JOE: It wasn't a miraculous recovery. They had injured a nerve in my spine with experimental shots that my parents had to agree to. And they did some injury that caused me to lose the use of my legs. I could stand, but I couldn't walk. It took about a year. There was a priest that I used to serve mass for who came to the house all the time to pray with me. He really helped me walk. My mother's hallway was ninety feet long; it was like a bowling alley. Like some of these houses in North Beach where all the rooms are on one

side. And he finally got me so that I could walk a couple of steps today and a couple of steps tomorrow. His name was Father O'Brien. And one day I walked the whole way without him there; I walked the whole way to the kitchen and [tears] ... (I get kind of emotional when I talk about that) ...

AUDREY: Yeah, it's very ... it's amazing

JOE: So that's why they didn't think that I would go in the Army.

AUDREY: And less than three years later you were in basic training.

JOE: Yes. And do you know what? The only course that I ever flunked in high school was ROTC! [Laugh] Even if you show up every day, you know, you have to get *some* kind of a grade. A "D" maybe. There were boys in that class that were really idiots; and they all passed! [Laugh] And I was so embarrassed, so humiliated, that I didn't say anything to my mother about it except that I had failed. And she said, "Well, it's only ROTC. What's the difference?" But if she had understood then the impact that failing would have had on me, she would have gone [to the school] and said, "Hey, what the hell is going on here?"

AUDREY: You want to tell us why you failed? What you did?

JOE: No, I don't. [Laugh}

AUDREY: OK [laugh]. We won't go there. So, you were in basic training with Red Skelton and you were able to do a little entertaining. And where was Camp Roberts?

JOE: Paso Robles. About half way between here and Los Angeles.

AUDREY: And the one, where you started, in Monterey ... what was the name of that?

JOE: I started at the Presidio at Monterey. That's where they took the inductees. And from there they shipped you to various camps all over the country. And I lucked out; and being at Camp Roberts I could come home once in a while.

AUDREY: And your health began to be really good?

JOE: I never had a sick day in the Army. I never had a sick day in the Army. It's amazing. If I wanted to stay home from school all I had to say [to my mother] was that I had a stomach ache. I found an old report card one day and I showed it to my kids; I got all "S's". S stood for "satisfactory". You either got a U (unsatisfactory) or an S. I think they had an E for "excellent" but I'm not sure. Anyhow, so I showed them [my kids] this card and they turned it over and on the back it says, "absent - 40 days". In one term! It's a wonder that I'm not really, really illiterate! [Laugh] But I really never liked to study. I love to read now and I read quite a bit. But in those days I was always rehearsing or something. And I was always getting out of class to prepare for a concert or a glee club or a drama class or something like that. I really really wanted to be an entertainer.

AUDREY: So you got your start in the Army!



Amelia Gallo Jachetta (Joe's Mother)
Community Activist, 1940's

JOE: Well, I think I got my start at Galileo [High School] because people knew me there for singing at rallies and stuff like that.

AUDREY: After your performance with the show girls at Camp Roberts, then what?

JOE: Well then I came home a few times and always brought GIs with me. When people heard that I lived in San Francisco, they wanted to come home with me, so I said "yes" to everybody. And once, after we got to the City I said, "here", and I gave everybody my address. And nineteen [guys] came to my mother's house. And *slept* there! (They had all brought sleeping bags.) And she was happy! She made a big pot of pasta for us, and salads, and she just loved it.

AUDREY: All those boys to cook for! What makes an Italian mama happy.

JOE: Well my mother was anything but an Italian mama. You know, she was born here and she was *the* PTA at Francisco Junior High School. She was chair lady of the Community Chest, The March of Dimes. And she was really an amazing lady. Way ahead of her time. She had a beautiful handwriting. She was very fluent in Italian and she had a wonderful vocabulary; she would take people to the doctor, take people for their citizenship and call the priest if somebody was dying. On the block, whenever there was anything wrong, they came and got Amelia.

AUDREY: What was that photo of her that was published in an old newspaper ... she was collecting for ...

JOE: The March of Dimes. That was in the 40's. I think I have another picture of her broadcasting to the Italian troops to lay down their arms. That was during the War. I was not here; I was already overseas.

AUDREY: Was she employed by the government to do that?

JOE: No, they just wanted someone who could speak Italian as well as she did, she and my aunt.

AUDREY: That brings up ... one of the things I wanted to ask you ... I know that during the War there was a lot of anti-Italian feeling in America. (JOE: Oh yeah.) And I wondered if you experienced that in the Army.

JOE: No, I didn't. No, I didn't because, don't forget there were Germans there too, in the Army. So, no I didn't get that. I was American and I did everything that every other eager guy did.

AUDREY: How did you get to be put in as a forward observer ... other than your young age?

JOE: You know what I think it was? As a forward observer you have to keep notes. And I filled out an application for something once, when they were testing us for something, and I wrote everything correctly in upper and lower case letters. I printed it and used the capitals where they belonged and the lower case letters where they belonged and I really think that's what did it. Because I had been trained in the artillery -- firing a howitzer. And I think that's, well, it took me *years* to get hearing aids from the government. In fact, this is the first one they have ever given me; I had to buy them before.

Whole days on the firing range ... we didn't have anything, we didn't even have cotton in our ears. If you fire a rifle right by your ear, it's terrible. But to be behind a howitzer when it's being fired is ... I can't even describe it!

AUDREY: So you've had a hearing difficulty ever since ...

JOE: No, no. I did not have a hearing problem until I got older. Not as old as now. But I kept saying, "What?" My wife started calling me "What"! So when I went to make a claim [at the VA] they told me that my hearing loss was not service connected and they turned me down. I even followed it through so that I could get a look at my original discharge examination papers and I did find something on that copy that they showed me. And it showed hearing loss. But somebody told me that was on the wrong line and it wasn't supposed to be there, and if it had been on the next line it would have meant something entirely different. I always felt that I had gotten screwed there. I felt terrible. So anyhow, now I needed a hearing aid. And they would give me the examination, but they wouldn't give me the hearing aid. So [recently] I went back for another hearing test and they had found that most people that did my type of work [in the Army] in those days had [developed] hearing loss. I didn't even question it. They said your hearing aid will be here in two weeks. And I thought, even if this is a mistake, I deserve it.

AUDREY: How many years did that take? Almost fifty years.

JOE: What do you mean *almost* fifty years. It took more than fifty years! I landed in Le Havre on January 1, 1945. It was 1944 that I went into the service.

AUDREY: And you shipped out of San Francisco?

JOE: No, I shipped out of Fort Meade, Maryland. That was a story there. I had a wisdom tooth that was a chronic thing. Every once in a while it would become inflamed. I had gone to the dentist and they canceled my sailing order. And here I was going to go overseas with the men that I knew, and they canceled it. And I just begged the dentist to, you know ... I said, "I've had this for years, and I take care of it with peroxide and it goes away." And he finally fixed it so that I could go, and I went overseas with my buddies. Not the buddies that I had trained with -- a few of them were there. In fact, one of them even went to the same outfit with me. And he, oh this is an absolutely *wonderful* story. But it's kind of jumping the gun.

AUDREY: It's OK. We'll come back. We'll come around.

JOE: It's OK? All right, when I landed in Le Havre, I was on the third largest ship afloat which was the Aquatania. And we were in bunks, maybe five high. Every part of the ship, even the swimming pool, had bunks in it. And I remember meeting a fellow, a young man there. His name was Eddie and he was like one of the Dead End Kids. He just was Brooklyn! And we were both small. So we got to Gourock, Scotland, and then they put us on a troop train which was so full there was no place to sit except on your duffel bag. If the Germans had known that train was there, they could have wiped out thousands of men. We went to Southampton. And then got on this very small freighter. And we were put in the hold of this ship and there we stayed for a couple of days waiting for the invasion barges. So for food, they just sent down buckets of sausage, on a rope! It seems unbelievable to me now that this could be what happened. But it did. And they gave us a loaf of

bread which was full of weevils. But we didn't care; we were hungry. Then it came time to go on the invasion barge. They had these rope ladders down the sides of the ship. And we went over the side into this barge. I was right up front. Absolutely where the door was going to go down [when it landed on the beach]. And when we landed it was at night. It was near midnight I was to find out later on. And that was my mother's and father's wedding anniversary. So I was really thinking of home. So when I got off this invasion barge my feet touched the ground and I thought, "OK, I'm just going to wade onto shore." There was no return fire by that time, you know. This was just getting to France. But I found that the invasion barge had landed on a sand bar, so as I walked off this sand bar I went way down over my head with a full pack on and the uniform . . .

TAPE ONE, SIDE B

AUDREY: You were just talking about debarking from the invasion barge. Now where was that?

JOE: Le Havre.

AUDREY: Le Havre. And this was after D-Day?

JOE: Oh yes.

AUDREY: So what was going on in the War when you landed there?

JOE: That was the last five months of the War which was the heaviest part of the War. And it happened to be the coldest winter that they had had in a

long time. And there I was at midnight on the beaches of Le Havre, soaking wet in January 1st weather.

AUDREY: So you went down under the water, what happened?

JOE: Well, you know, you just kinda go down. Like as a kid, you go into a swimming pool and get yourself too far before you know how to swim and you kind of can get back to the shallow end before you drown. See, to the other guys, the water would have been up to here [gesturing to chin]. But to me, it was over my head.

AUDREY: So you were the first guy off the barge?

JOE: Yeah, in the front. Oh, somebody may have been standing alongside of me. Also, my duffel bag, when I went under it went floating away. And somehow or other, they marched us to a girls' school that they had used for a replacement depot.

AUDREY: They marched you in your wet uniform to a girls' school?

JOE: What else? But I felt that if I kept moving I was OK. So when we got to this girls' school, that's where I was able to take off my clothes and we got dry blankets and dry clothes. Miraculously -- small, medium, large -- everything fit. When you're wearing fatigues, it doesn't make that much difference. We stayed there, I don't remember how long -- but at least a few days before being sent to where we were going. One of the things that happened there I laugh at now; I think it was so funny. I was so young I didn't have the experience that a lot of my other buddies had with bordellos and

things like that. The girls' school was one whole square block. And the rear echelon that was stationed there ... we got talking and they told us there was a cat house down the street and that we could go. And everybody said, "Oh, that's wonderful!", you know. "Let's go!" And they [the guys in the unit that had already been stationed there] had French money... but I don't remember what we gave them for their French money. There was a window in the wall and it couldn't be locked. So we crawled out this window and went into the town of Le Havre. When I thought about it later, I was AWOL in time of war! Pretty serious!

It was snowing, there were about a half dozen of us, and we got to this house and there was this *long* line of GI's -- all lined up alongside this building waiting to get laid. I'm frozen stiff, I had snow up to here, and I'm [gestures, slapping his own arms to keep warm] ... it seemed like a wonderful idea [laugh] which all of a sudden became sheer madness. I wanted to go back but I was afraid. I didn't know Le Havre; I was afraid I wouldn't be able to find my way back, the window would be closed somehow, what would I do? I just didn't dare get separated from my buddies. So I get to the door of this place. At last, I thought, wonderful! And I get in and there was a staircase that went around and the *staircase* was lined with GI's. [Laugh] Mamma mia! So finally I get to a hallway and they pointed out a door to me and I went there, and there was this woman -- old enough to be my mother, you know -- and she took great pity on me because there was not a thing that I could do. I was absolutely suffering from hypothermia; I was just frozen. And she gave me my money back and told me to come back the next day. I always love that story. And you know, Audrey, as funny as that is, I could never tell that story without crying.

I could never tell any of this, you know. And in those days -- post traumatic stress -- they didn't know anything about it. I was having nightmares; I almost broke Lucy's jaw one night when she tried to wake me up from one of those dreams. You wake up and you don't know that you're dreaming and you don't know where you are; you have this panic attack. If you were up in a thirty story building you'd jump out the window. So, anyhow, I can tell them now; but it took a lot of therapy and Prozac. That's an absolutely wonderful drug. It has side effects that are . . . well, I don't want to talk about those. They're miserable. But I tried other things and even though they didn't have the same side effects, they didn't do for me what Prozac does.

AUDREY: If we could stop here for just a minute, just to back up a few steps . . . you went, you came on a troop ship, the Aquatania. That was not a troop ship, that was a cruiser . . . is that right?

JOE: Well, that was a luxury liner. And the Queen Mary was being used for the same thing!

AUDREY: Because, when you said they had bunks in the swimming pool, I . . . [laugh] that was a tip-off. So was that an American or an English ship?

JOE: No that was an English ship. You could tell that it was a magnificent cruise ship ... the dining room had a hardwood staircase and all that. And what I remember most about that was sighting submarines. Not that we saw them, but we knew there were submarines in the area so they had to go a zigzag course to get there, and it took a long time to get to Scotland.

AUDREY: And then you got on a train . . .

JOE: Then I got on a train and went to Southampton.

AUDREY: And then you got on a freighter . . .

JOE: And then I got on a freighter . . .

AUDREY: And you were put in the hold for two days and fed sausages in buckets . . .

JOE: . . . and bread with weevils . . .

AUDREY: What was going on inside you at that point? What were you thinking, feeling, if you can remember?

JOE: Well, actually, I went through basic training with a lot of men who were all in the same boat and it just didn't seem that we had to worry. Even then, I prayed a lot. I really prayed a lot. In fact, another one of the stories I'll tell you: I got the nickname Holy Joe. Because I used to say mass. A chaplain would come up and he'd set up an altar on the jeep and say, "Anyone know how to serve mass?" And I always served mass. So this fellow who was an atheist, or he claimed to be an atheist, used to say, "Hey, Holy Joe!" Or they'd come looking for me with the chaplain. "Hey, this is Holy Joe!"

AUDREY: Well then if you were praying a lot you must have had fear . . .

JOE: No, no. I was brought up to say my evening prayers and I said them and I never felt alone. I missed Lucy very much. But she didn't even know I

cared. I think we talked about that. Well, anyhow, after getting out of that school, then by truck we were brought to a railroad station where they had these boxcars. And they were left over from World War One. And they were called the Forty and Eight, which were forty men and eight horses. I don't know if it was forty men *and* eight horses or forty men *or* eight horses. But anyhow, they put us in this boxcar and shut the door and someone found that you could light this gunk that they gave us, that you could put on your boots to waterproof your boots. And someone found that you could light it and it would burn like Sterno. And so they did. And in this corner it caused a lot of condensation and, by that time I was separated from Eddie. Eddie was sent somewhere else on the front.

[Pause in tape]

AUDREY: OK. You just thought of two things . . .

JOE: All right. One of the things was, on the way to dry clothes, marching with these men (hundreds of them) someone came out of the darkness and handed me a warm piece of newspaper and I opened it and there was a turkey leg and thigh in it. And my friend Eddie told me to throw it away; somebody was trying to poison us. And I didn't care, you know. It was New Years' and it was my mother and father's anniversary [tears] and I said, "I'm going to eat it. Happy New Year."

AUDREY: And this was after you had come out of the water [from the landing barge] soaking . . .

JOE: I had forgotten to tell you that.

AUDREY: That's a wonderful memory.

JOE: And that's the last I saw of Eddie. [At the girls' school] we got on the floor in our sleeping bags and showered and ate out of these mess kits (real food rather than rationed food). Then he got sent somewhere else, and as I say, I don't remember his last name and I never saw him again.

AUDREY: What was it about him that makes you remember him, though?

JOE: He sounded like he was making believe, you know. He had a Bronx accent and he talked like one of the Dead End Kids [a movie made in the 30's]. At the time I thought he sounded like Leo Gorse.

AUDREY: It's what my dad used to call a dese, dems and dose guy.

JOE: Yeah, dese guys and dose guys. And North Beach, you know, most of my friends talked like that. Not *that* bad [like Eddie], but they'd say "youse guys" and "ain't" and "dese" and "dose" -- that was North Beach English. But my mother and father were born here and, while I was home recuperating I used to listen to all the soaps. I'm a soap opera buff. I know Ma Perkins who had a nephew named Willie Fitz and a man who worked for her called Shuffle Shobber. And then there was Our Gal Sunday who was left on the doorstep of two old miners and later married wealthy Lord Henry Brynthrope who was the master of Black Swan Hall.

AUDREY: See, you had a good education while you were home, you learned the language [laugh]!

JOE: I learned the language, yeah. Oh I have a lot of trivia stuck in my head [from] the soap operas. I even remember One Man's Family -- Mother Barber and Father Barber. They lived at Sea Cliff. I Love a Mystery and Mert and Marge. I loved Mert and Marge. They had a dress designer named Clarence Tiffingtuffer. He was a costume designer. Oh I could go on . . .

AUDREY: OK. So the last time you saw Eddie was . . .

JOE: The last time I saw Eddie was, I guess, maybe the night of the bordello incident or maybe one more day after that. But then there was another friend that I knew whose name was Jess Grisham. He was from Manteca. And we both were assigned to the same outfit which was the Seventh Field Artillery Observations Battalion. And we were in the same boxcar. It got so cold, so very cold. They say it was one of the coldest winters they had had (I didn't find that out until I was reading Citizen Soldiers by Stephen Ambrose). We wrapped ourselves together in our blanket to keep warm and when the train stopped it was morning and we opened the door and there was just a sea of snow, just as far as you could see. So we got off the train to relieve ourselves and I remember looking down this row of boxcars and all these GI's peeing in the snow [laugh]. And I remember trying to write "Lucy" in the snow. And at that time she didn't even know I cared. We were just good friends, which we still are! I think that's wonderful.

AUDREY: It's phenomenal, after 50 years.

JOE: Well, we've had our ups and downs. We kind of ignore [the downs] until we fall in love again and that's the way it's been.

AUDREY: The stuff, like Sterno, that they lit in the boxcar: that was to keep warm?

JOE: No, no. That was to put on your shoes to make them waterproof. But someone found that you could light it. And psychologically, well you have a flame in front of you, but it didn't [generate any heat]. When they stopped the train and Jess and I tried to stand up, we were frozen to the wall of the boxcar. You see, condensation had caused the ice to form and we were frozen to the wall. We had to pull ourselves away. And when I finally got to my outfit (and Jess was sent to the same outfit, but to a different Battery - A Battery, B Battery, C Battery -- and we saw one another once in a while), when I got there I was very ill. I had like pleurisy, or something. My teeth all felt loose. It was so cold that ... I really don't know what happened, but I thought I was going to lose my teeth. I could actually move my teeth back and forth. I wasn't in pain. Just sick.

I guess there was kind of a lull in the war during the winter time, and we were in a little town called Villing in Alsace Lorraine. And we took over people's houses, you know, sent them out to live with neighbors and we took their houses. And for that time I had a bathroom. And for the kind of work that I did, I also had a bed. We would go in and take over somebody's house when we got there and I often had a bed. Quite often I didn't, you know. Quite often I had a foxhole. But not too often.

Oh, one thing I forgot to tell you. When I got my duffel bag back [after losing it in the water coming off the landing barge], I had a lot of identification on it and they found my duffel bag. It was picked up [on the beach] and brought

to me. And I had Lucy's picture in there and I had to dry it out. And I still have it. I *still* have it. [Tears] Finally, backtracking, when I told you about proposing to Lucy by mail ... well, there was a time when I was in this building which was kind of like a town hall in this little town, but it was high and it was a good observation post and evidently the Germans knew that we were there so they started to shell the building. And the building came down around our ears. And we ran for the basement. And the fellow that was to become my close buddy through the war (because we were both rod men and we were both in the same battery) ... well there was a low ceiling going down into this basement and you had to kind of scoot out under it, you know? Well he ran *right* into it, with all of these men running behind him (there were about ten of us, I forget whether we were ten or twelve), well anyhow we were all in the basement and the entire building came down. His name was Lawrence Joyce. I would like to find him. He was almost knocked out, he had a lump on his head.

And here we were, huddled in the corner and the building came down. And then the fellow that named me Holy Joe, the atheist, he was there and he really had an absolute, almost nervous breakdown. And he started to shake. And he started to shake. And I'm trying to calm him down and trying to keep Larry from going asleep [passing out] I guess. And I had a rosary. I was taught that prayer is important. And all I did was say an Act of Contrition. And I was ready to die. But I would not ... if you're Catholic and you say an Act of Contrition, you go *straight* to heaven, no purgatory, no nothing. That's a good confession. (My ideas have changed since.) Anyhow...

AUDREY: Did it help these two guys? Did you do it out loud?



The Lucy Picture

(Note thumbtack holes. This photo accompanied Joe throughout his war years.)

JOE: No I didn't do it out loud. I did not do it out loud. In fact, I didn't even know he saw me. And later, *later*, he was to tell me that, he says, "That was really something. You stayed calm and I fell apart. And what I figured out was that when you get into situations like the one we were in, you better believe in *something*. Because I was all by myself. And that's why I almost lost it. And you had somebody." So he, the fellow who called my Holy Joe, called me Holy Joe up until the end but it had a different tone, a different meaning after that.

AUDREY: That was in Alsace?

JOE: No, that was somewhere else in Germany . . . I never knew where I was.

AUDREY: Was that the first time you'd been bombed?

JOE: No, but it was the first time I was in a building that was completely destroyed, you know. Somewhere I have a picture that later on . . . ah! the famous picture, the Lucy picture. We got out of there and later on, I don't remember how this happened, but we passed that same building and I went in there and I found the knapsack that I had with Lucy's picture in it. The second time that I retrieved that! And it was a picture that . . . she's much prettier now. That was a picture taken by a glamour photographer whose name was Romaine. And he took very theatrical pictures. And there was Lucy looking beautiful with a light behind her head . . .

AUDREY: How long after that incident did you go back and find your knapsack?

JOE: I don't remember, might have been the same day, I don't know.

AUDREY: Just amazing . . .

END OF TAPE ONE

TAPE TWO

AUDREY: You were about to tell me about proposing to Lucy by mail.

JOE: I really thought that that night I was going to die. And I was ready for it. I'd said an Act of Contrition. And when I came out of it I thought, well, I don't know how I could survive this. Sooner or later one of these shells or one of these bombs or somebody's rifle is gonna get me. My main fear was being shot at by a sniper which did happen several times. You hear a shot -- especially if you're out where you don't hear any background machine gun fire or howitzer shells whistling by -- you hear a shot and immediately you just get flat on your face and you hear the shot going over your head. It might not have hit you but probably would have.

And so I just thought that I wanted to let Lucy know how I felt. So I requested something called a "blue" envelope. And a blue envelope is when you want to send a letter that you don't want censored by your own officers. And I didn't want these officers that I ... you know, being in combat and

having an officer over you is different from being, say, in basic training. They're your friends and you can talk to them not as an officer. You don't even salute in combat. I remember one time [laugh] saluting someone and having him say, "Knock it off." So I wrote this letter to Lucy. I told her how I felt. I don't remember exactly what I said. But I do remember asking her to wear my fraternity pin. And her answer was, "At the termination of the War when we can look at things in their true perspective, we can talk more about this. And in the meantime, yes, I will wear your fraternity pin." And then when I got back we got talking about if we should ever get married. But somehow or other all of a sudden we started saying, "...when we get married." As I say, I had never had a job in my life. I was in school. And I didn't know what to do. And that's how I became a hairdresser. It was the last thing in the world I ever would have done.

AUDREY: I just want to go back for a minute. You were describing the blue letter ... were you saying that the officers and the men in a combat situation became much more intimate? (JOE: Yes.) And so it would have been embarrassing for you for him to have seen this letter?

JOE: Yeah, it just seemed that I wanted it to myself and I didn't want someone who would read that letter and say, "Hey, look at this letter that Joe is writing to this girl," you know? It might have gotten around and I just . . . especially if she said, "No." You know? That would have been a kind of a "Dear John" letter.

AUDREY: Yes, of course. So that incident where you almost got buried ...

JOE: Yeah, well in talking to my friend Joyce, we just didn't know if we'd ever

come out of this alive. So I just felt the need to tell Lucy that. And I never thought I'd ever have to face her. In fact, I didn't expect her to say, "Yes." I'm telling you, I was really young-looking. I didn't look like I was old enough to be engaged.

You know, I don't want to talk about combat. That's already been done. If you want that, go see Private Ryan. Also, my combat experiences, which I've always thought were *terrible*, are very pale compared to what other people went through. The infantry -- they were the real heroes of the War. The infantry and the people in the tanks. I always thought about what it would be like to be in a tank. You can't see anything, you know. Have you ever been in a tank? Well, if they ever have a show or something, you'll see what I mean. You can't see anything.

I will tell you about one incident that haunted me. As I say, I was not an instrument man. An instrument man is the one that really takes the reading. They were showing me how to use an instrument (everybody was supposed to know *something* about it). You never know. In an emergency you might have to take over. Maybe that instrument man might get killed and you could finish doing what he was doing. Anyhow, the very first time they let me take a reading -- on a bunch of [German] tanks -- I took a reading, and before you know it, within minutes, there was artillery fire. Usually when you take a reading, you know, so many degrees to the left, so many degrees to the right, you're off target, you know. Well, [this was] a *direct hit*. And they cheered me! And I looked and I saw a man on top of his tank and a shell hit him and he went flying up in the air. And oh, I . . . I carried that guilt for years. Later on in one of my dreams I saw, and I don't know whether it's something that printed in my brain, but I saw someone come out of the tank

and smoke coming out of the tank and I think the guy was on fire. But I don't know if that actually happened. Because I had *terrible* nightmares; I don't know how Lucy would sleep with me. When I first got out of the service and I had these nightmares, and it was before I was married, my mother (who would put up with anything) . . . oh I put her through hell. I remember once we went to the theater; and they used to pass a collection for the Red Cross. They passed a can down and they showed a little film -- "well, he's coming back, but he's coming back minus a leg." And the guy who was playing that part was Noah Berry, Jr. And I got so emotional, so upset, that I got up and I left the theater and I left my mother sitting there. And I walked across the street, across Market Street (the theater isn't there anymore -- it used to be called The California) and I got on the F Car on Stockton Street and was on my way home and my mother was still in the theater! And I got off after a couple of blocks and ran back there and she was walking around the lobby looking for me. I did lots of things like that.

I lived close to the waterfront; and I would wake up with a nightmare and be afraid to go back to sleep and I'd walk down to the waterfront. Once my mother followed me in her nightgown and bathrobe. She followed me. And I'd go down there and sit on the end of the pier. She thought I was going to jump, you know. And I think of the things that other GIs saw . . . and I didn't see anything! Really, nothing!

Did I tell you about the . . . this is something that happened just a couple of months ago . . . a man with a German accent came into my salon. His daughter had sent him down; they were going somewhere and he needed a haircut. She lives on the Hill here somewhere (I don't know her name). I don't know *his* name. But in talking, we were about the same age. He's a

couple of years younger than I am. He went into the German army when he was 17. In talking, we found that we were in the same area at the same time when the War ended. And I had heard a story about Salzburg where the Germans that were there were given 24 hours to surrender or they [the Allies] would level the town. And he told me that they [the Germans] put up a white flag. And the SS Troopers came and took the white flag down and shot the man that put it up. I hadn't heard *that*. But I did hear the Salzburg reports of being destroyed. And he [this man who came in for a haircut] was *there*. He was one of the people that put up the white flag. So before he left [San Francisco], a couple of weeks later, he came back to get another haircut. You know, we hugged one another. I have a [post]card at the shop. He was on vacation. There's no return address on it. He says, "Do you remember the conversation that we had at your salon?" Those are the things that I can . . . I can probably talk about the rest of it too, but I don't *want* to, you know. I told you, all you have to do is [go the movies]. There's even a book out written by a forward observer called Memoirs of a Forward Observer. I sent for it and read it and . . . well, go see Private Ryan and that's more than I would see in ten wars. That's why I say, I had a piece of cake.

AUDREY: When you were there in 1945, after D-Day . . . what was D-Day? Was that when France . . .

JOE: D-Day was when the Americans invaded Normandy. But there was all of this return fire, see. People who got off those invasion barges on D-Day, most of them were killed before they ever got to combat. I've always wondered why there was not more support, air power. I often wondered why. Three thousand people were shot getting off the invasion barges. Some of

them never got off the invasion barges. The barges were sunk. They drowned.

AUDREY: Did you know this when your barge was going . . .

JOE: No. No. I did not know that. The same way with Dachau. I was so shocked when I went to Dachau. Well, you've seen . . .

AUDREY: That's something I want to ask you about if you're willing to talk about it. I was just trying to put where *you* were historically. So the Allies had invaded France and it was then, sort of the beginning of the end of the War, I presume. (JOE: yeah.) But then you and your buddies had to cross through France into Germany and push them back. Is that right? (JOE: That's right.) And that took from January 1, 1945 until the end of the War?

JOE: Oh, I don't know, about six months.

AUDREY: And then, you referred to yourself as part of the Occupation Army. So you were there at the end of the War and stayed after the War. (JOE: Yes.) And that's when you found Dachau?

JOE: I was at Dachau when the War ended.

AUDREY: You were *there* when it ended!

JOE: We had arrived there. So here all of a sudden, you know, you have all of these men and the concentration camp is being liberated and you have . . . I had a carbine. I carried a carbine. I never shot it. I never fired my small

arms, my carbine. So they had to do something with you. So there was a little town outside of Dachau and we went to that and took over houses the way we did before and so there we were and the War was over. So we stayed there as Army of Occupation. And this little town didn't need Army of Occupation. It was like a little resort town. It had this big lake. I showed you that picture of me diving off that diving board. You can see how skinny I was.

AUDREY: Do you remember how you learned that the War was over and what happened?

JOE: You know, I don't. We knew the War was over. I don't remember . . . it's a blank. I don't remember whether it was announced to me. I remember being on the Danube River when President Roosevelt died. And I remember Zeke -- the fellow who called me Holy Joe -- coming up a trail. This was on the Danube that's not blue; it's muddier than any river I've ever seen. And he said, "Our President is dead." And, after that, we talked about it. I didn't really know the significance of Franklin Delano Roosevelt dying -- what would happen. I didn't even know who Harry Truman was.

AUDREY: So, finding out the end of the War must not have been cause for tremendous celebration or you would have remembered.

JOE: Yeah, as I say, we were Army of Occupation. We were still in the Army. We still had to walk guard and things like that.

AUDREY: Do you want to talk about finding Dachau?

JOE: Well, I went to Dachau just a few days after we got there and only because I had to drive Captain Bowden, his name was. I was his driver. And we had to drive to Dachau. He had to go there for Colonel Schwartz for . . . something . . . I don't know. And we went in. And there were still people there. And I had a camera. I had liberated a camera (liberated a camera! -- there was a big pile of cameras that had been confiscated, you know) and I took this camera; and it was the only one that had film in it. I took several pictures there. Captain Bowden had the film developed and gave copies to those of us who had been there. So when the history of my Outfit was printed, there was one of the pictures that I took. I didn't submit that picture for the history; I don't know who did. In fact, Lucy and I later destroyed my copies of those photos because she thought maybe they had something to do with my nightmares.

At Dachau I saw ... uh ... people that were still alive but they looked like they were dead. To this day I can't go to a poultry shop and look at the dead chickens. They looked like ... In fact, I saw a gondola, a train, the kind they ship grapes in, and that was *full* of dead Jewish people. And I saw a small, like a wagon that you'd carry hay in, and these bodies were piled up one on top of the other. I never did see the ovens.

AUDREY: And this is what the GIs saw when they went into the camps.

JOE: When the GIs who actually liberated the camp -- I was part of the liberation force but I didn't have anything to do with liberating . . .

AUDREY: What did liberating the camp mean?

JOE: They went in there and knocked the wire fences down with tanks and the Germans were retreating and surrendering and ...

AUDREY: So your Company came in very shortly after that?

JOE: That's where we were. In that area, like within walking distance. It's kind of like a dream. I remember our trucks, our convoy coming up to . . . and lots of tanks and a lot of infantry, a lot of . . . that's probably one of the first times that I ever saw infantry men. I told you, I never saw any American carnage. I saw a *lot* of German carnage. And the thing that I saw . . . they looked younger than *me*.

When I was a child I witnessed an accident where a cement truck went over a man lengthwise. And my friend Nello Piccinini -- there used to be a restaurant on Sansome Street called Jovanello's -- well Nello Piccinini, we went to school together. And we used to walk to Francisco Junior High School. We were just rounding Columbus Avenue, where Columbus Avenue turns into Grant Avenue. And on the corner there used to be a bar called Ray's. And there was a cement truck there and we were just gonna cross the street! And the cement truck came down and went over this man. First I saw, like orange, you know. And then, blood. And it was just so traumatic. We continued ... we went to school ... and we were so sick when we got to school they sent us home. Just walked home. Go home, you know? And I didn't think that I would ever forget that. It was like combat, you know?

And somehow or other, over the years, it just got put into my files. It just kind of floated away and disappeared and didn't bother me any more. And I, once, in the beginning, after Alsace-Lorraine, I remember we were going

through a wood and I came across a squashed German who was frozen. And instead of his body being round (they must have run over him after he was frozen) because he was like that [gesture, flat]. And I found a dog tag near him, a German dog tag near him, and I picked it up as a souvenir. And that's another thing that haunted me. I should have known. The dog tag wouldn't have been his dog tag, he would have had his on him. Certainly some kind of identification. And I thought, "What if I have his identification? He could be the unknown soldier." That bothered me for a long time. I threw it away. Things like that. But I didn't see any American carnage.

AUDREY: How long were you with the Army of Occupation before you came home?

JOE: Well, dates are kind of hazy in my mind. Just a few months.

AUDREY: Do you remember coming home?

JOE: Ohhhh, yes! In fact, we were back in Le Havre and they had these debarkation centers and they were all named after cigarette companies. And I was at Camp Lucky Strike . . . or maybe Pall Mall, I don't know. [Laugh] We had to wait for a ship to take us home ... which was a smaller freighter than the one that I got on in Southampton. We were five hundred men on it and two hundred and fifty slept in the daytime and two hundred and fifty slept at night. And my bunk was right in the front of the ship . . . up and down, up and down. I felt like I was nauseous, getting nauseous, but I somehow or other . . . somebody told me that if I never missed a meal I wouldn't get sick. People were hanging over the sides throwing up, and I ate every meal and I didn't get sick. I *made* myself eat and I did not get sick.

And that was the time when we had a little dog, a mascot, and he fell overboard. And they weren't going to stop the ship with five hundred men on it. And I remember seeing this little dog . . . just gone. I remember seeing the Queen Mary pass us like we were standing still. They called these boats "Kaiser Kettles". I even remember the book I was reading: H. Allen Smith was the author and it was called Low Man on the Totem Pole. He also wrote Life in a Putty Knife Factory. I don't know whether I read it or not; I probably did.

AUDREY: Why did they call them [the freighters] Kaiser Kettles?

JOE: Because they were built by Henry J. Kaiser just for transporting troops. And there was nothing fancy.

AUDREY: So they were thrown together during the War for . . .

JOE: Yeah, I slept in a hammock . . . in the front of the ship near the latrine.

AUDREY: You landed in New York?

JOE: I don't know. I don't remember seeing the Statue of Liberty. I was young and thinking of getting home. [Joe subsequently found a copy of the history of his Outfit. The following excerpt describes another soldier's memory:

"We boarded the Liberty Ship S.S. Leidy at Le Havre on 14 August -- homeward bound at last. Memories of the voyage home: end of the Jap War -- the CBI is not for us . . . a brief view of England . . . milk and ice cream every day . . . our only casualty, the little dog

lost overboard when he became too energetic in chasing sea gulls.
... the Queen Mary passing us as if we were standing still ...
the progress chart showing our route and the daily mileage ...
the good old U.S.A. in sight again ... men running up on deck, some
in underwear, to stand in the rain and see the lights of the Statue
of Liberty. The next day we debarked, and most of us were home
within three or four days, after passing through Camp Kilmer, New
Jersey.”]

I didn't care where I landed. It was ... New Jersey. Yeah. I landed in New
Jersey, where, when I got there. . . Well, I went to Paris . . .

AUDREY: Oh you went to Paris. You left that out!

JOE: Yeah, I went to Paris. While we were waiting for our boat [in Le Havre],
in groups they took us for a weekend in Paris. And I stayed at the Grand
Hotel and, actually I ended up staying somewhere else. I really don't want to
go into that. I met the most wonderful lady at the ballet. I went to see Swan
Lake. And this lady, I shared a box with her. Her name was Yolanda. And she
hated the American GIs. She thought they were crude and rude and ... she
spoke Italian. She was a widow and she had been married to someone who
worked for, represented ... oh that's kind of vague in my mind. But anyhow,
she thought that I was just too young to be away from my mother. I wrote
to her for a few years. She was twice my age. She was forty-two. And I
was by that time, I guess, twenty.

When I went to Paris, one of the friends that I was with was actually
someone who was wounded right along side of me. And he wasn't badly hurt.



Red Skelton, center
Joe, far left

He had . . . a shell hit the dirt and it tattooed his face. And he didn't have a shirt on and the skin came right off his chest. So that was the end of the War for him for awhile. He had a wound here [gestures to arm] and I put a tourniquet on. So he was removed and went to a hospital. But when we became Army of Occupation he wanted to go home with his Outfit so they let him return to the Outfit and we were together [in Paris]. And he was all right. The only thing he had was . . . he looked like he had little brown tattoos on his face. His name was John Kelly. He was a hairdresser. And he wanted to visit some of these salons in Paris. So I went with him.

AUDREY: I can't resist asking you who went with you to the ballet in Paris.

JOE: I went by myself.

AUDREY: And you happened to meet . . .

JOE: Nobody wanted to go the ballet with me so . . . I met Yolanda. She had her hair . . . she was blond, bleached, and she had her hair in a chignon. She was quite lovely. She was a French woman who spoke Italian. Her husband had spoken Italian also. She thought that I was different from everybody else and she decided to take me under her wing.

AUDREY: That's something every young man should have, especially in Paris!

JOE: But anyhow, when I got home and I was discharged I sat next to a GI on the train, and *he* was a hairdresser. And his parents owned a beauty salon at the Clift Hotel. And from him I found the answer to a problem. He told me that if I went to beauty school, and if I went six days a week, eight hours a

day, I could take a State Board examination and have a license and I would have a profession. And not ever having had a job, I didn't care what it was. And I went to California School of Cosmetology. And I wasn't suited for it. But by that time Lucy and I had announced our engagement. I don't know if I told you about . . . Lucy was also very young looking. And when we would go to a prom or fraternity thing, we'd go down to the St. Francis Hotel and, during the War, if you looked a little bit like you might be an adult, nobody said anything. But to look at me or to look at Lucy [at that time] you'd know we were just kids at a prom. So we would stay out of sight and they'd go into the Patent Leather Room at the St. Francis Hotel and be served alcohol.

AUDREY: These were your friends. (JOE: Our friends, yes.) But you and Lucy couldn't pass.

JOE: No, we couldn't pass. There was no way. If we were there it was a dead giveaway. So we'd just go and sit in the lobby and watch all the rich people.

AUDREY: So this was before you went overseas.

JOE: This was before I was in the Army.

AUDREY: OK. So when you came back and went shopping for an engagement ring..

JOE: We went shopping for an engagement ring . . . they really paid very little attention to us. There used to be a very fancy jeweler on the corner of Post and Stockton (where the Hyatt Union Square is now). I forget what it was

called. But they didn't think we were serious and they would point to a ring there, "This one is a thousand dollars and this one is so much . . ." It was like: come on, kids, get outta here, you bother me. We went to several. We even went to Kay Jewelers. They used to have a commercial: "It's OK to owe Kay until pay day . . ." So finally, it was lunch time and we went to a place called Masky's on Grant Avenue downtown. [You spell it] just like "mask", I guess, because they had a comedy/tragedy mask [logo]. And Lucy started to cry because it was just something we decided to do on the spur of the moment. I was home on furlough from being stationed in Camp Hood. And she was on her way to school; in fact, she had books with her. And we just decided to go shopping for an engagement ring, so she cut school.

You see, the poop was that we were going to be sent to the Pacific; that was pretty depressing. But then we went to New Jersey. I'm trying to remember . . . I've got this a little bit screwed up because when I got back I went through that port of debarkation and what I wanted to tell you was . . . when I was in Paris I traded my shoes, everything that I had with me, for perfume. And I bought a bottle of Shalimar for my mother, one for my aunt, and one for Lucy. And they were pretty bottles. So when we got to New Jersey, they said, "OK. Leave your duffel bags by your bunks and go down to mess hall." And when we got back somebody had cut my barracks bag open and stolen all my perfume. One of my own buddies! Not a friend of mine. No friend would ever do something like that.

So anyhow . . . now I'm kind of all mixed up . . . there's a lot to tell without going through . . . well, anyhow, [getting back to buying the engagement ring] we went to Granat Brothers and there was this old man (old, well he was probably younger than I am now, you know) and he took out a black cloth and

put it down. We told him how much money . . . I had five hundred dollars to spend. That was some War Bonds that I had. He showed us a ring. He didn't show us anything that [cost] more than we had. Maybe it was less than five hundred dollars, I don't know. In fact, just a little while ago, maybe a few months ago, what I found was a Valentine's Card from my mother and father -- I had a balance and they made the last payment on my engagement ring as a Valentine's gift. And so we were engaged. I was still in the Army but I was declared "essential". I had to train someone to do my job. Of course the whole Outfit was declared essential. But I balked at . . . what do you have to do to teach someone to hold a rod and be a target for somebody, you know? But I stayed there and all I did was hitch rides back on an Air Force C-20 or C-47 or something like that. From Camp Hood, Texas. I spent all my money just coming home and going back and coming home. And I never trained anybody. I sang at an officer's wedding. I sang Ave Maria at an officer's wedding. Nylon stockings were absolutely scarce; there weren't any. I met a Wack there who was part of my religious group and I used to tell her all about Lucy. And she was issued two pair of nylons and she gave me one pair to send to Lucy. And the thing is Lucy wears a size 5 1/2 shoe and she wore a size 9! It didn't matter. Lucy just folded them under. [Laugh] We seemed to have a lot going for us. There's a lot to be said for falling in love with your best friend.

AUDREY: How long, then, were you in Texas before you were discharged?

JOE: Oh, I don't know. Several months. I don't know. They sent me to Muskogee, Oklahoma and then to Camp Hood. And I remember in Muskogee there was a carnival, a permanent carnival that was there for the GIs. And there was a striptease woman there. And after she did her striptease, for

another *ten cents*, you could go backstage and she would take off all her clothes.

AUDREY: I'm not gonna ask you if you did that!

JOE: Yes I did. I mean, how would it be if all my friends went in and I said, "No, not me!" That would have guaranteed . . . they didn't even *know* that my nickname was Holy Joe [laugh].

AUDREY: You said earlier that you had a Spam story.

JOE: Well, there was a lull [in the War] at one time when we were lost. I was in General Patton's Third Army. And General Patton moved so fast that quite often we were stranded *on the other side*! We were only a hundred and fifty men. And we had no access to supplies, you know, rations. But someone came up with a truckload of Spam. So everybody was issued a can of Spam. And then the next day you were issued another can of Spam. And I had Spam! And there are two things: One with Yolanda, who on the black market, she invited me to dinner and on the black market [laugh] she bought Spam! She cooked *Spam* for me! And when Lucy and I were first married, (I guess I had not told her . . . I talked very little about the War, my kids didn't even know this because I used to start crying, you know it just was humiliating to me) and Lucy bought a can of Spam [laugh] and cooked it with pineapple on the top. Lucy's very creative, you know. Pineapple on the top and orange, scooped out orange peel on the side and maraschino cherries . . . And I chewed it and chewed it and . . . I think she was hurt more than sorry. I could be wrong.



Joe and Lucy, 1945

We had an absolute wonderful place to live. It was two houses up from where my parents lived and it was a little penthouse built on top of this old house. And we had four rooms and fourteen windows and they all overlooked the Bay and the Bridge and Treasure Island.

AUDREY: A honeymoon apartment.

JOE: That's right. I have stories to tell you about that too. Once my mother was going to take . . . we had two children then . . . and we were at my mother's house and my mother was going to take care of the children and we were going to go to a movie. Instead we decided to sneak back up to our little penthouse and do what young people do . . . and old people too. You know, you're never too old to do *something*. And it started to rain. And my wife had clothes on the line. And my mother, I could hear her coming up the stairs; and we locked the door from the inside. And I could hear her outside as she's taking the clothes off the line, you know. She had a key! That was a mistake. When Lucy had the baby my mother helped to take care of her and do things like that and she needed the key to come in. Well she never gave it back. So she was trying to get in and I heard her talking to the woman downstairs whose name was Elsie, Elsie Abraham. And she couldn't get in. And she said, "Well, I'll go down and get Joe." My father, see. Because she couldn't make the key work. And my father knew how to do anything. So we got dressed and sneaked out and laughed all the way down the stairs. There was an alley right across the street from our house called Prescott Court and we *ran* through this alley into the school yard and just *laughed* all the way . . . and I don't remember if we finally went to the movies or not.[Laugh]

END OF INTERVIEW

Nov. 19, 1945

Dearest Mother,

Your letter of Nov 6 arrived today. I guess that you might call my having written all those letters, a letter writing spree. I think that I explained that I was Acting Charge of quarters for three days and didn't have much more to do. Well tonight we graduated from Battalion Charge of Quarters. That's what I got for running a fire rating. I didn't want you to think it on my return. It's about time, and you know as I see it, I was much

2
letter off as a Kc. At the present
time I'm still holding down jobs
five and yesterday morning I took
on another on the Chaplain's assistant
for the Co. I visit the nation
twice, supply truck, & the supply officers,
Sgt. I'm seeing Lieutenant Supply Sgt
and I'm seeing with the Co & my
own Sgt. It's no wonder that
they finally gave me another strip

I received a letter from Dale
today and it really made me
feel quite good. I thought that
I was over that stage where most
people are important just in my
own mind & guess that I'm not

His letter was so interesting that
I read it over twice. Did he tell
you about his making a business
out of an overboardment. What
next? Did he say that Alice could
get into pictures if he really
wanted to. He said that he &
Alice came over to see you. What
do you think of her? She really
has changed, hasn't she?

Isn't it a coincidence that he
and I should be promoted at
the same time but I'm glad
this really should have been
a long time ago. But letters are
what we have to pass

I havent written to Bess yet
but I will just as soon as I get
a chance to.

I received a letter from Rosemond
today. she said that Tony Marx
is home and in the hospital.
Whats wrong with him.

I'm going to move to Camp Hood
Texas soon but continue waiting
here as it is rather indefinite yet
I only hope that I move in time
for me to get my Christmas furlough

Love my love to all

Love
Dad

THE FOLLOWING FOUR PAGES ARE
EXCERPTED FROM A PAMPHLET DOCUMENTING
THE HISTORY OF JOE'S BATTALION FROM
1941 THROUGH 1945

*7th Field Artillery Observation
Battalion*



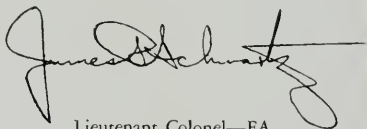
"From Bagg to Braunau!"

TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE 7TH FA OBSERVATION BATTALION:

This, the Combat History of the 7th Field Artillery Observation Battalion, was written in response to many requests for a record of your achievements in the British Isles, France, Luxembourg, Germany, and Austria during World War II. Each of you has contributed to this incomparable record of achievements, and each member of the Battalion merits the highest praise.

As a vital cog in the XX Corps Artillery of General Patton's Third U. S. Army, you gathered glory from Utah Beach in Normandy spearheading across France to Metz, smashing the South flank of the Ardennes counter-offensive, cracking the Siegfried Line, crossing the Rhine at Mainz, pursuing the enemy through Central Germany across the Danube and finally ending the War on the Austrian frontier. Throughout these five major campaigns you earned the praise of higher commanders for your speed and excellence of communications, survey, target location, adjustment of fires, and general technical superiority. The ever-soldierly conduct of our members and their splendid maintenance of vehicles and equipment in continuous front-line battle positions elicited favorable comment wherever the Battalion served.

My greatest honor was to have commanded such a loyal group of American soldiers. To each of you, I extend my personal thanks for your devotion to duty, your great courage, and the splendid spirit which helped our forces gain the final victory.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "James H. Schwartz". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Lieutenant Colonel—FA.



After we had broken through the Siegfried Line, the march to the Rhine brought back memories of our battles across France, and it was a race to see whether we or the Germans could get there first. We rolled through Trier, Kusel, Kaiserslautern, Bad Dürkheim, Bad Kreuznach, meeting very little opposition, and the Nazi's will to fight was obliterated as his left flank was gathered up and put in the PW cages. Following is a quotation from the XX Corps Artillery Counter-battery Report No. 212:

"The enemy artillery west of the Rhine is 'Alles Kaput.' Only a few isolated guns are singing their swan song. It is believed that very little if any of his artillery got away 'to fight another day.' The swift encircling movements, the destructive power of the artillery and the air, combined to eliminate the artillery from the picture.

"He had two choices: to stand and be overrun or to retreat and be destroyed on the roads.

"On the road between Frankenstein and Bad Dürkheim, two names faintly suggestive of the conditions on the road, is one of the greatest scenes of destruction we have ever seen. Here on the road, the trains and the artillery of what appears to be a division were caught in a defile and massacred by the Air Corps. Running down the curving roadway the passerby first notices a few scattered vehicles and dead horses, and then it seems to grow in crescendo until finally he is in the midst of such a twisted mass of death and destruction that single items can no longer stand out. It is so enormous that the mind cannot measure it! The only impression that is made is that this is the acme and ultimate of death, destruction and chaos. It is a scene that should be photographed for the Master Race. Let them see the 'Road to Glory' by courtesy of the Air Corps."

As the Rhineland Campaign ended on the 28th of March, we were resting at Mainz, ready to cross the "Mississippi of Europe"—the Rhine River. It was a formidable looking barrier—wide, deep, swift, and if Jerry had been well organized we would have had a very difficult time in crossing it. Later developments, however, proved he just didn't have the "stuff" left to fight.



Battery "B" Bn. Parade—Simbach Inn, Germany—20 May '45



Crossing the Rhine at Mainz, 30 March '45



Dachau

On this the 30th Day of April, 1995, at Congregation Emanu-El in San Francisco, in commemoration of Holocaust Remembrance Day and the 50th Anniversary of Liberation of the Nazi Concentration Camps.

The Jewish community of the San Francisco Bay Area honors

Joseph Pachetta

as a member of the 7th Field Artillery - 3rd Army
which helped liberate KZ Dachau

As a member of a liberating unit you brought freedom to those who suffered so cruelly; you helped restore life to those who were near death; you ensured that there would be eyewitnesses to the horrors which occurred; you hastened the defeat of Nazism; and you have provided living testimony about the lessons of the Holocaust.

With eternal gratitude for your courage and caring which enabled a remnant of our people to survive against all odds.

William F. Loventburg

William F. Loventburg, Chairman
Committee of Remembrance
Jewish Community Relations Council

Luc de Groot

Luc de Groot
President
Holocaust Center of Northern California

JACHETTA ORAL HISTORY, COPY # 3
WAR MEMORIES

After you have read this history, please return it to:

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